AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION

2019 AMA Winter Academic Conference

Understanding Complexity, Transforming the Marketplace

February 22-24 | Austin, TX

PROCEEDINGS

Volume 30

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When Consumer Involvement Matters: The Effects of Interactive Music on Consumer Experience and Purchase Intention

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Keywords: *interactive music, interactivity, consumer involvement, consumer experience, purchase intention, e-commerce, The Dual-Process Model of Interactivity Effects*

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

The current study discusses how the adoption of interactive music, as an innovative user interface technique, to e-commerce website design can influence consumer experience and purchase intention. Interactive music refers to a category of audio media where specific user actions lead to alteration in various aspects of music, including tempo, mode, texture, and volume (Winkler, 2001). The effects of interactive music on online consumer behavior can be attributed to both the music and interactivity component. On one hand, music serves as an atmospheric cue to create a more pleasant shopping environment, leading to positive attitudinal and behavioral responses of consumers. On the other hand, former literature suggested interactivity can elicit distinct effects on consumers under high- and low-involvement conditions, depending on whether interactivity serves as a peripheral cue or as a factor that raises the level of elaboration (Liu and Shrum, 2009). Therefore, the current study developed a research interest in the effects of interactive music on (1) consumer experience, as a hedonic attribute, and (2) pu chase intention, as a high-elaboration variable. Specifically, as high-involvement consumers are known to pursue a higher extent of shopping enjoyment (Lee and Chang, 2011; Kim et al., 2007) and involve in a higher extent of information processing (Chang and Wildt, 1994; Park et al., 2007), the facilitating effects of interactive music is likely to result in more positive effects on high-involvement consumers. Thus, we propose the following hypotheses for the present study:

H1: For low-involvement consumers, the presence of static background music on the e-commerce website will lead to positive effects on consumer experience (H1a) and purchase intention (H1b).

H2: For high-involvement consumers, the application of interaction music on the e-commerce website will lead to positive effects on consumer experience (H2a) and purchase intention (H2b).

Method and Data

The current study constructed a stimulus e-commerce website to conduct a single-factor experiment with three conditions (the condition with interactive music, the condition with static background music, and the control condition without background music). Specifically, soundtrack layering, a format of interactive music which allows users to layer additional beats and melody to the original soundtrack, (Fraser and Bradford, 2013), is applied to compose the interactive music condition. Self-reported questionnaires collected data from N = 251 respondents. Measurements in the current experiment include: a manipulation check measuring participants' *perceived interactivity, consumer involvement* measured by the Personal Involvement Scales by Zaichkowsky (1985), *consumer experience* measured by twelve scales (good, happy, exciting, satisfying, pleasurable, engaging, relaxing, refreshing, delightful, wonderful, unique, and memorable) (Chang, Cheung, and Lai, 2005), and *purchase intention* measured by four items asking participants to fill in

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blanks indicating (1) the proportion of times (from 0 to 100%) he/she shopped for the brand's main product category that he/she would shop on the stimulus online store, (2) the amount out of every $100 spent on online shopping that he/she would spend at the stimulus online store, (3) the amount out of every $100 spent on the brand's main product category that he/she would spend at the stimulus online store, and (4) considering the total amount he/she spent on the brand's main product category per year, the percentage (from 0 to 100%) that he/she would spend on the stimulus online store (Babin and Attaway, 2000).

Summary of Findings

Findings suggest that the use of interactive music in virtual retailing store design can lead to greater consumer experience and higher purchase intention through two unique pathways. When consumers were highly involved, the interactive music condition led to greater consumers experience and purchase intention than its counterparts. In contrast, low-involvement consumers preferred to have static background music, reporting greater consumer experience and purchase intention.

Key Contributions

Research findings of the current study contribute to literature by (1) extending the dual process models of persuasion and the Dual-Process Model of Interactivity Effects to explain online consumer experience, (2) addressing the deficiency of scholarly discussion on the effects of interactive music on consumer behavior, and (3) re-emphasizing the importance of applying innovative technology in the current e-commerce environment.

References are available on request.